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THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFICIENT SECONDARY-SCHOOL TEACHER

WHEN the sculptor seeks to make a statue of the perfect man, he is not content with a single model, but he searches out many. From one he chooses a graceful hand; from another, a well-rounded thigh; from another, a high and thoughtful forehead; from still another, firm-set but gentle lips. It is becoming for one who would word a simple sketch of the efficient teacher in like manner to search for excellences wherever there have been noble teachers, to choose the best, and to arrange in a whole what has been chosen. We are not so vain as to think that excellence in the teacher was born with our generation. The past, rich in memories, holds for us the names of many noble teachers.

We are told that the schoolmasters of the colonial period of our history were of three classes.

There were a few men of scholarly preparation who made teaching the work of their lives, and kept up the best traditions of the free-schoolmasters of Old England—of Mulcaster and Brinsley and Charles Hoole. Then there were young clergymen, and ministers of non-episcopalian denominations, recently from college, who taught school while waiting for a call to the pastoral office. Finally there was a miscellaneous lot of adventurers, indented servants, educated rogues, and the like, all either mentally or morally incompetent, or both, who taught school only to keep from starving.¹

Such is the lineage from which we are sprung. We can proudly say that for the most part the educated rogues and adventurers have disappeared. The high moral character of the teachers of America is cause for the most profound congratulation. The teacher may not belong to this religious sect or to that religious sect, or indeed to any religious sect; but he is almost uniformly a man of honor, of deep-seated convictions—a man to whose higher nature appeal can be made with assurance of a hearing. Nevertheless, the schoolmasters who keep up the best traditions are even now altogether too few, and there are still many who look upon teaching merely as a prelude to the ministry or medicine or matrimony.

¹ E. E. BROWN, *The Making of Our Middle Schools*.

If we ask who were the men who in those early days set the honorable traditions for the efficient teacher to follow, we shall find first and foremost Ezekiel Cheever, of whose life and fame Cotton Mather wrote

Ink is too vile a Liquor; Liquid Gold
Should fill the Pen, by which such things are told;

William Tennent, head of the famous Log College of New Jersey, from which sprang Princeton University; and Nathan Hale, patriot and "Martyr Spy," who was among the first to enlist in the American army. These three men represent the best traditions of our early schoolmasters: Ezekiel Cheever, man of learning and exact scholarship—Cheever's *Accidence* was long the first book for all New England boys who would know Latin; William Tennent, imbued with the religious spirit of the great awakening; and Nathan Hale, in whose noble heart patriotism stood foremost. The best traditions of teaching which our ancestors handed down to us were then learning, religious zeal, patriotism. Learning, yearning for men's souls, love of country—these are not unfitting standards by which to measure the efficient teacher of the present.

First, then, the efficient teacher in a secondary school should be a man of broad learning. He should be respected for his learning, not only by his pupils, but by the community. Good text-books have improved teaching, but they have tended to demoralize the teacher. Too often the man is not to be found for the text-books that are piled upon his desk. Such a man is likely to infuse into his pupils respect for text-books rather than a love of learning. Learning comes to be an impersonal dead thing, rather than a warm breathing thing of grace and dignity. Too many of our teachers are good at school management merely. Their reputation rests upon that rather than upon the fulness of their learning. The externals of school-teaching are emphasized at the expense of the learning which is its heart and core. It is better to have a sound and healthy body than it is to have modish and fashionable clothing.

There are a number of conditions which tend to discourage broad scholarship in our secondary-school teachers. Our school programs are unstable. The enormous increase in pupils, the multiplicity of studies, the love of novelty, the lack of any recognized

type which might act as a fly-wheel, make our programs a seething pot. Teachers boil up one year with one group of studies, and must teach these. The next year they boil up with another group, and with these their lot is cast for another year. The most valuable teacher in a corps of teachers comes to be the one who can teach anything—the jack of all trades who is good at none. Scholarship is a slow product. It needs time and quiet for growth. One cannot pull it up every year and transplant it to new soil. And, further, this confusion and lack of uniformity in the programs of our schools discourage thorough preparation on the part of those who intend to become teachers. The most willing and the most competent are confused by the kaleidoscopic changes, in opportunities and requirements. Depth of scholarship seems less valued than superficial variety. This is unfortunate for the schools, dishonorable for the teaching guild, and suicidal to progress in scholarship. If scholarship is to be nurtured anywhere, it should be nurtured among teachers. It is the teachers' crown. No amount of sympathy, no amount of method, can compensate for its absence. Our education has too much a tendency to display itself in brick and mortar, in high-sounding names, in a multiplication of offices and official machinery. All this is very well in its place, but its place is strictly a place of subordination. It may as like be the tinsel of the ballet-dancer as the ermine of the judge. It is the heart within that is the real value, and not the outer clothing. How long will it be before we shall learn that, after all, that which is intangible is of more value than the tangible; that the unseen scholarship of the teacher is the gem for which brick and mortar, yes marble and granite, are but a coarse and vulgar setting?

This attainment of ripe scholarship is something which the teacher must often work out alone. Our universities with their summer schools are doing something to foster it. The general public is giving it scant thought and small reward. To them a place is a place and a salary a salary. Executive ability seems far more valuable than learning or wisdom; but rest assured the time will come when this shall no longer be so. Our people will some time have done with the husks of externals and value the kernel more than the waving beard. But if the people be blind, yet we the teachers must not see darkly.

The teachers are the leaders of thought, and must not only satisfy the future, but make that future. We cannot be content with mere seemings or mere forms. In our hands has been placed the torch of learning. Remember the labors of the Venerable Bede and of the noble Alcuin. The fact that learning is now stored in books does not relieve us of our duty. Though the conflagration be great, the close-packed leaves of books give forth but a smoky flame. The torch of learning must be held high by human hands, if it is to be seen of men. We forget this, and too often think that, because learning is desiccated in books, learning no longer has need of champions and trenchant knights. We are forever thinking that what can be learned may wait until tomorrow and tomorrow's morrow. The scholar and the teacher cannot long be kept separate, nor will they be.

To aid the scholarship of our teacher we must foster the large central high school, as opposed to the small and weak local school. Local pride that each little community may have a high school must not hide the advantages of larger and better-equipped schools. High-school teachers must be sought for who are teachers of something, and not just teachers of anything. More uniform and better-planned courses of study must be adopted. Wild experimentation must be bridled. Teachers must not be required to teach many subjects nor to change their subjects at the principal's whim. These are, indeed, externals, but they are like climate and atmosphere. They make it possible for the tender plant of scholarship to put forth buds, blossom, and bear fruit. The keeping of marks, the ringing of program bells, even the correcting of papers, must not stand before the attainment of a rich and accurate scholarship.

As Ezekiel Cheever represents the scholarship of the efficient teacher, William Tennent represents the yearning for souls which must characterize the true teacher. Learning is by no means the only characteristic of a good teacher. He must have a yearning for the souls of men; to mold them and shape them for good. This yearning may not necessarily be religious, but it must be missionary in its spirit. The true teacher is very close akin to the true missionary. Each is seeking the good of the souls of men. One goes into a foreign country and labors to convert adults; the other leaves the companionship of those of his own years and passes his life with children

and youth, seeking not to reform and remold, but to form and mold. Both alike must be devoured with an eternal yearning for souls. This missionary spirit, almost uncontrolled at times, has made the Jesuits a mighty power—and also many another religious body vowed to teaching. The true teacher will sacrifice self for his pupils. Indeed, the whole nature of education through and through is self-sacrifice and charity. It is what the present generation will do, not for itself, but for the next generation. And he who represents this gigantic deed of self-sacrifice and devotion must himself be on fire with this same self-sacrifice and devotion. When teaching comes to be merely a means of getting a living, the trade by which one earns his daily bread, then come weary hours, then come stupid classes, then come weariness and ennui. That which might buoy up the soul, yes! lift it above the waters into the high air of heaven—this becomes a weight and a burden, crushing and deadening, a tedious nightmare of repetition and dreariness held upon us by necessity. Let not a man think that because he loves learning he is called to teach. Let him also ask himself, “Do I love the souls of men and the souls of little children?” There was no error in those early colonial days when the preacher and the teacher stood side by side as men near of kin.

The roots of this spirit are found in the conception of education as a transforming and molding. To educate is not simply to load with learning—the individual’s self still remaining the same. To educate is to create; it is more than to convert. And it is not a creation which comes into birth at the fiat of might, but it is the product of the patient, fostering care of love and sympathy; of the brooding of the soul of the teacher over the soul of the pupil.

Nathan Hale, the New London teacher and the “Martyr Spy,” was a teacher and a patriot. Every teacher who is an efficient teacher must be a patriot; but patriotism may not sleep from war to war. The patriotism of the teacher is the patriotism of peace rather than of war. The true patriot is the man who recognizes the needs of his people, whatever those needs may be, and makes haste to serve them. Hence the teacher must not be a man apart from men, beetling-browed and stern; but he must feel the pulsing life of other men and of the community which he serves. Once

education was an affair of the church; then it came to be the work of the state. Now more and more it is coming to be the deed of society rather than the deed of the state, and society merely uses the state to execute its will. The true teacher of today must be a student of social science, as the true teacher of the earlier days was a student of theology. He must study the needs and demands of the social whole. Wherever the schools have been exponents of the church, the church has declared what shall be taught and how it shall be taught. Once in these colonies it was declared that no man might teach except as he had a license from the bishop of London. Wherever the state has ruled the schools it has declared by edict what shall be taught. Republican France, with its motto of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," has deemed it fitting to play the tyrant here and forbidden the teaching brothers to hold their schools within the French domain. It has made the schools its tool, its means of self-perpetuation. We are more fortunate. Our schools are not dominated by the church nor tyrannized by the state. Never has there existed an institution where one might better serve, not a creed, not a king, but the good of the social whole, the good of all mankind; but at the same time as we have liberty and opportunity we have responsibility. The teacher must study the complex relations which make up our social and industrial life. He must in thought unravel thread from thread. He must see how to complete the unfinished pattern, and in his school with his scholars he must begin to weave them into what shall be a more beautiful pattern than the past has promised. This is patriotism in its noblest sense. The secondary-school teacher must be the uncompromising foe of selfish greed, whether it be the petty sin of the individual, or whether as a vast impersonal corporation it grinds the poor in the dust; and he must be the friend and defender of charity and brotherly love. He must be the foe of careless and wasteful living, and he must be the friend of industry and high ideals. He must be the foe of a schooling which is not a true preparation for living, and he must be the friend and champion of a wise preparation for living.

The teacher stands face to face with the most ambitious problem the human race has ever set about to solve in a practical way—the uplifting and advancement of the race itself. The secondary-school

teacher has the important place in this great undertaking—to him it belongs to select the future leaders and inspire them to leadership. In this work there is but one guide—the experience of the past. The teacher must make this experience his own. He must master the history of education, and the history of the onward progress of civilization itself. Else he is a blind leader of the blind. He must know the actual part which education has performed in race-advancement, that he may apply the great power of education wisely and rationally. It is true that the way which education has pursued in its onward march is strewn with stupid blunders and lost causes. These mistakes have been repeated again and again. It is one of the saddest facts of the history of education that even great teachers have been so completely ignorant of the past, and so unable to profit by the teachings of the past. In the future this must not be. In the past there have been teachers who have even been proud of their ignorance of these matters, who have affected to despise that of which they knew nothing—the usual resource of the pedant; and pedantry is the teacher's besetting sin. It is true that histories of education until very recent times have been mere text-books of biography, scarcely touching the great problems with which they have professed to deal. But why has this been so? Simply because the teachers themselves have failed to realize the far-reaching character of their work and the magnitude of their difficulties. The teacher least of all has a right to believe that wisdom was born with him or with his generation. Surely this will not be the belief of the efficient teacher.

The recent study of the meaning and promise of adolescence has opened another vast field of which the secondary teacher of the past has been in self-satisfied ignorance. The hopeful sign is that we are just knowing enough to know how totally ignorant we are. We are dealing with vast forces for human uplifting or degradation—forces which have their roots deep in the prehistoric history of the race. They are the very texture of human nature itself. They are like threads for long undershot which at last appear above the surface and begin to trace a pattern, as if guided by an unseen hand. How we have been snarling these threads and cutting them, and how often we have been unable even to see them at all, or denied them when we did see them! As well may a physician be an efficient

physician and be ignorant of physiology, as a secondary-school teacher be an efficient teacher and be ignorant of the problems of adolescence. This study of adolescence has upset, and will still more upset, the traditional psychology of the schools. We as teachers stand each day in the presence of the most wonderful of the wonderful things of the world. To us, indeed,

The world is so full of a number of things
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

Shall the secondary-school teacher, then, be a student of psychology? yes! and no! He shall know what other men have thought about the mind, its growth and development. He shall study the minds of his pupils. He shall know and wonder at the marvels of their unfolding; but he shall know them, not for the sake of the knowledge but for the sake of the boy and for the sake of the girl. He shall study his pupils, not as things, as objects of scientific knowledge, but as beings like himself, as sons and daughters. He shall know his pupils rather sympathetically and instinctively than simply intellectually. He shall know their joys, because their joys are his joys; he shall know their sorrows, because their sorrows are his sorrows. He shall know their successes, because their successes are his successes. The efficient teacher takes his pupils to his heart, because they are a part of himself. This is why the greatest teachers have often lacked method, but they have never lacked heart. They have been *men*—men of sympathetic power, of magnetic influence—but never mere cold, intellectual methodizers.

And yet method and professional skill have an important part in the efficient secondary-school teacher. He is not a mere hearer of lessons, nor yet a mere entertainer. He arouses the interest of his pupils and inspires their earnest effort. He is an inspirer and not a taskmaster. He is not ashamed to have a method and to employ it, but he is a master of method, and method is not a master of him. The true teacher is an artist. His work delights him. This does not mean that he has not been a student of technique; but rather that he has spent weary hours in its mastery. This does not mean that he is ignorant of the history of his art; but rather that this history has fascinated and enchained him. The artist seeks in every field the means of improving his art, but he uses these with the hand of

the master and not with the hand of the slave. Some men are brave because they are too ignorant to know fear. Some men think themselves wise because they never have studied the mysteries of the world. Ostrich-like they hide their heads in the sand. Some teachers think themselves above method because they have never studied method. The only way to be a master of method is to know it and rise upon it, as upon stepping-stones, to the master's seat. To be a student of method means that the teacher has reached the stage of self-consciousness. There are three stages by which the race of men grows. Lowest of all is the instinctive. Like blind men, they grope upward in the dark, not even knowing that it is upward. Then there is the imitative stage, where the good attracts by its goodness, and we imitate because it is good; but the ways and means are unknown to us. And last comes the self-conscious stage, where we construct our own ideals and through self-criticism strive to attain them. So there are three grades of growth in the development of the teacher: First there is the instinctive teacher, who teaches well because he was born with happy instincts; for the most part he does not know the why, and he surely does not know the how. Then there is the imitative teacher, who is fortunate if he has had good models and unchanged conditions. And last there is the teacher who consciously sets himself ideals and consciously seeks the means of realizing them, who is thoughtful when he succeeds and who learns by failure; whose difficulties are problems to be solved; whose problems are challenges to victory. The efficient teacher is wise, hopeful, courageous. He inquires often what are the characteristics of an efficient teacher, and seeks to realize them. The method of the secondary-school teacher must be a more skilful method than that of the grammar-school teacher. It must be more hidden, more self-effacing; hence it is more difficult to acquire, and needs more painstaking labor and penetrating comprehension.

There have been mentioned four important characteristics of an efficient teacher: first, he is a man of learning; second, he is imbued with a yearning for the souls of men, a passion to mold and make men; third he is in sympathetic touch with the world of men about him; he is a lover of mankind; fourth, he is a trained artist who does his work with the skilful and intelligent hand of the true artist. The

outlook for secondary education never was brighter than it is today. Schools are multiplied, and are still multiplying. Their halls are thronged with an ever-increasing crowd of pupils. An interested public gives a ready support and a lively faith; but, after all, this is useless unless the teacher himself is efficient. Our greatest hope and confidence rest upon the fact that secondary-school teachers are themselves active, progressive, and enthusiastic. Secondary education could ask no better augury of the future.

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